THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. I. November 1, 1935 Heshvan 5, 5696 No. 13

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EDITORIALS

The Organizational Problem in Zionism

AMONG the discussions and resolutions which gave the Nineteenth Zionist Congress its reputation for statesmanship, were those pertaining to the problem of organization. The discussion centered about a proposal emanating from Ben Gurion, leader of the Labor group, and endorsed after heated discussion, by his party, to establish territorial unions as the local units within the World Zionist Organization. The argument pointed out that under the present pattern of organization, every one of the Zionist parties in the various countries conducts its work without regard to the other parties and without any form of inter-party cooperation. It urged the importance of establishing in every land a kind of organization that should be modelled after the World Zionist Congress, giving every party representation in proportion to the number of shekolim it sells. This body would be charged with the responsibility of conducting the Zionist affairs and carrying out the decisions of the Zionist Congresses in every country, as well as taking charge of the Keren Kayemet and Keren Hayesod campaigns, while the parties individually would continue to raise their separate party funds.

Only after much debate and over the opposition of a considerable minority, was the recommendation adopted by the Nineteenth Zionist Congress, but flexibility was permitted in the carrying out of the plan by the territorial groups. It marks a fundamental change in the structure of the local Zionist organizations. The advantages of the plan are easily discernible. The man in the street, unfamiliar with the inner workings of the Zionist movement, its party structure, its subdivisions and their respective differences in program and ideology, is confused by the competitive appeals and arguments to which he is subjected. The moral strength deriving from a well organized movement is thus forfeited. The most aggressive party may gain a temporary advantage, but Zionism loses, for the lack of a strong united front. The attitude of the man in the street is an important factor. If the ranks of the Zionist movement are to grow, as they must grow in the immediate future, the new recruits will have to come from the men and women who are now outside the Zionist organization. Only a strong united front can win their confidence.

The problem and the opportunity are especially keen in this country. The four million Jews of the United States are the greatest reservoir of potential Zionist strength in the world today. They are psychologically ready for Zionism. Most of them are already Zionists in sentiment.

It still remains for them to become affiliated, organized Zionists. A Zionist organization, along the lines endorsed by the Congress, representing the united forces of the Zionist movement in every land, would be able to achieve the maximum results in attracting new forces.

From the propaganda standpoint, as a means of impressing Zionism upon non-Jewish as well as Jewish public opinion, the advantages of the plan are obvious.

One must not lose sight, however, of the difficulties which confront the effectuation of this plan in our country. The Zionist Organization of America, representing the general Zionists, which at the present time holds the place of eminence in American Zionism, stands the risk of losing part of its prestige, if it should become integrated into an all embracing Zionist Organization of America. It is not only a matter of prestige. It is also a question of whether the yardstick which the Zionist Congress has designated for measuring the strength of the parties respectively within an all embracing organization, is a proper measure. The recent experience with the elections for the Congress delegates, proved again that the strength of the general Zionists in this country is not properly reflected by the shekel or the shekel ballot. There must be another yardstick. It would seem only fair that every Jew who makes a contribution of at least one dollar a year to the Keren Kayemet or to the Keren Hayesod, the two central Zionist funds, accompanied by a signed acceptance of the Zionist platform, should be counted as well as the Jew who buys a shekel. Some such plan would have to be worked out in order to avoid placing a premium on the present objectionable system of disposing of shekolim by high pressure methods which some people can use more effectively than others.

Some way can be found to overcome the difficulties. The major objective,—a united front in the Zionist movement,—is an urgent and immediate need.

Capitalizing The Sky

AS everybody knows, the radicals believe that religion is an opiate to the masses, maintained by the ruling classes to distract the victims of exploitation from their real interests. It promises "pie in the sky bye and bye" so that the hungry hordes won't demand bread right here and now. Radicals should therefore consider it their sacred duty to help discredit, and eventually abolish religion.

What we want to know is, why do they not demand the simultaneous abolition of astronomy? It too promises to become an opiate to the masses. Its exponents and popularizers do not even promise "pie in the sky"; they seem to think that it is quite enough to look at the sky and "a better life" will ensue. Take Mr. Charles Hayden, for example. He is the man whose generosity made possible the establishment of the Planetarium recently dedicated in New York. At the opening exercises he said, "Especially in times like this, when bolshevism and socialism have been spreading, I think anything is beneficial that makes men realize that there exists a much greater power in the universe than the human being on earth, and I feel that what one sees and hears in the Planetarium should make him stop, look, and listen and realize that fact. This should help for a better life." Does it not seem that Mr. Hayden wants people to come to the Planetarium, to stop, look, listen and forget all about such earthly things as the reconstruction of the social order? Why not: Down With Astronomy?

Apparently they realize, correctly, that the trouble lies with Mr. Hayden, and not with a knowledge of the stars. They undoubtedly understand that astronomy, like other human institutions, is not inherently either good or bad, but becomes so through the uses to which it is put; that the theatre, the movies, the radio, chemistry, biology—any expression of the human mind can be abused and made to serve selfish and oppressive masters, or can be made blessings for mankind.

If they understand these things, why do they not realize that the same mutually contradictory purposes may be served by religion too? We maintain that they have been blinded by sheer prejudice when they contend that religion is an unmitigated evil, incapable of any service to a decent cause. We are quite ready to admit that religion has been used to cloak evil deeds in sanctimonious robes. But we deny absolutely that religion has no potentialities for good; on the contrary, we insist that religion can be utilized most effectively to achieve those very social aims in whose name religion is now condemned.

We believe that if radicals would stop preaching the abolition of religion, and would begin appealing for the realization of their ideals in the name of religion, they would get much further than they have succeeded in getting thus far. Let us illustrate what we mean by applying that method to astronomy. We would issue a call to the men and women of New York as follows: "Come to the Planetarium. Look up at the heavens and study the myriads of stars and suns and other heavenly bodies. Observe their order, their beauty, their harmony, the unswerving steadiness of their courses. Then go out into man's world and observe the chaos, the disorder and the conflict. Inspired by the rationality and the unity of the cosmos, dedicate yourselves to achieving similar rationality and unity in the realm of human affairs." That would be a good speech, we think, and it would help to indicate whatever power for good the Planetarium possesses.

Religion is still a powerful force in the world. If it were utilized in a similar manner, it could be made to help advance the cause of social reconstruction.

Amend The Federation By-Laws

AS the winter approaches, the problem of philanthropy and relief becomes acute, and the various Federations gird their loins for another gigantic campaign for funds. Public relief is far from adequate at best, and now that the Federal Administration has begun to retrench, the private agencies must redouble their efforts.

In view of that fact, Federation in New York has already begun its campaign for funds. But this year, the leaders of Federation may find in some of their erstwhile contributors a resistance to giving never encountered before. Not that funds are more scarce; on the contrary, the upper middle class has begun to see signs of definite recovery. The resistance will come from a considerable number of Jews in New York who will insist that, before they make another contribution, a labor controversy be settled in one of the Federation institutions.

That controversy dates from last May when twenty-six workers were locked out of Lebanon Hospital for participating in a two-hour stoppage, held to protest against the intolerable working conditions in the hospital. It is not our purpose at this time to discuss the details of the matter. We want merely to point out certain conditions which this controversy has brought out clearly; and we wish further to direct whatever criticism of Federation which may be forthcoming into the most constructive channels.

The directors of this particular hospital apparently decided to penalize the workers for the stoppage; no other institution in New York has taken action. The workers have appealed to Federation itself. They did so, because on previous occasions, when questions of wages and hours had come up, the directors had referred them to Federation, claiming that funds were supplied by Federation. The directors had made it clear that they were helpless, since they depended entirely upon Federation for the amounts of their budget. The workers, however, discovered that Federation would assume no responsibility in the controversy concerning the lock-out. The point was that each institution had complete autonomy, and Federation could not interfere in the internal affairs of the hospital. Thus the responsibility was

shifted from one to the other, and the workers found themselves with no communal body to which to appeal. And those Jews, in New York, who desired to see the matter arbitrated, were treated to a demonstration of unseemly behavior on the part of the Board of Trustees of the hospital, who controlled the distribution of public funds and refused to submit the matter to arbitration.

Such a situation could never have arisen if New York Jewry were organized as a Community. If the various public Jewish institutions were part of a communal organization which was democratically administered, the whole conflict could have been adjudicated promptly—and without the *hilul ha-shem* which it has caused. But the establishment of a Community is not immediately at hand; what then can be done now?

We suggest that Federation introduce such modifications in its by-laws as will provide for a greater degree of communal responsibility in the handling of Federation funds; that a system of representation be introduced, which would afford the large masses of contributors a voice in the administration of the various institutions. We are well aware that Federation was originally organized for the sole purpose of rendering more efficient the collection of funds. But the time has now come for development beyond that point in the direction of a greater degree of communal responsibility.

The Place of Palestine in Jewish Life

By Ira Eisenstein

PALESTINE, as the national Jewish home, is today a reality. It is no longer a fantastic notion in the minds of visionaries. Palestine is a concrete item in the Jewish heritage of those who are now growing up into Jewish life. Just as it is necessary for us to revaluate the whole of Judaism for our day, so is it essential that we clarify the function of Palestine in the Jewish life of the diaspora.

Zionism is based on a definite philosophy of Jewish life. In that philosophy Palestine occupies a central place. This fact, however, does not save the ideology of Zionism from the need of revision. It is my purpose in this paper to indicate that the old ideologies of Zionism are as much in need of replacement as the old orthodoxies of Judaism as a whole. In the short time of its existence Zionism has developed three different ideologies. I shall attempt to show their origins, their programs, the failure of those programs and the reasons for the failure. I shall then attempt to formulate the new Zionist philosophy which must be developed, if Jews in the diaspora are to take a warm and vital interest in the rebuilding of Palestine.

I.

The precursor of modern Zionism was messianism, which prevailed from the time of the dispersion until our day. According to messianism, Palestine was to be the setting of world redemption. When God saw fit, he would send his messiah to inaugurate a new era in world history. That era would be one of universal acknowledgment of the one true God, and the universal acceptance of his Torah. Preliminary to this world redemption, and necessary to it, would be the redemption of Israel. Israel would be gathered from the four corners of the earth and established on their soil in Palestine. Jerusalem would then become the capital of the world theocracy. To it from time to time would come the nations of the world to demonstrate their allegiance to God. This is the intent of the prophetic vision in which the nations are represented as calling to one another, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us His ways and we will walk in His path." The occasion for the universal pilgrimage, according to one of the pro-

phetic writers, would be the festival of Sukkot.

The breakdown of the messianic idea was caused by the breakdown of the entire intellectual superstructure upon which it was based. The age-long belief in divine revelation was corroded by the "acids" of modern science; and the modern national state which grew up simultaneously with the development of modern scientific ideas helped Jews to dispense with the traditional messianic conception. When Jews were granted citizenship in the state they either rejected altogether the notion that they would be transplanted to far-away Palestine, or they continued to accept this notion as an inactive item in their spiritual baggage, one which had no pragmatic significance for them and on which they would not be required to take any action. Those who still retained the notion did so as a sort of compromise between the belief in the supernatural initiation of events and the belief in the human initiation of events. They did not mind relying on the help of God in those matters which did not interfere with the conduct of their daily affairs. The return to Palestine was to them one of those matters.

II

Those Jews, therefore, who regarded the Emancipation as genuine and permanent lost interest in Palestine. Among those who formulated a philosophy of their own status, there were many who left Palestine completely from its reckoning. Reformist Jews omitted from their thinking and their worship all reference to Palestine, and discouraged as far as possible the use of Hebrew in Jewish life. But when the Emancipation began to reveal itself for what it really was, Palestine once again loomed up on the horizon of the Jewish consciousness, this time as a place of refuge. Modern anti-Semitism gave the lie to all the liberal pretentions of modern western society, and the virulent programs in eastern Europe confronted the Jews with the necessity of finding elsewhere a place for secure living. The founders and exponents of modern Zionism, therefore, thought of Palestine almost exclusively as a country which would absorb the entire Jewish people and make possible a complete repudiation of the diaspora. The very fact that Theodore Herzl was tempted by the suggestion of the Territorialists proves that refuge was the prime desideratum. If he yielded to the pressure of those who would consider nothing but Palestine, it was not because of deliberate choice, but rather from a sentimental attachment to a national habit of thought, which identified the people of Israel with the land of Israel. The fact remains that Herzlian Zionism conceived Palestine as a harbor of refuge for the entire Jewish people, where they could find shelter from their enemies throughout the world.

Yet even the remarkable increase in Palestine's population from 70,000 in 1917 to 350,000 in 1935, even the possibility of so large an emigration as that indicated by 47,000 new arrivals within the first seven months of this year, cannot blind us to the fact that the idea of a concentrated Jewry within the boundaries of Palestien is purely a fantastic one. Nobody today seriously believes that all of world Jewry can be crowded into that small country. So inconceivable is this prospect that many Jews have been led to rationalize, and to maintain that Palestine was never intended to house the entire Jewish people. The fact is, however, that at the beginning of the Jewish Emancipation (about the year 1800) the total Jewish population throughout the world amounted to two and one-half million souls. Certainly Palestine could then have held that many people. Even as late as 1850, when the total population of the world was 4,750,000, Palestine might still have been regarded as a place of refuge for all Jews. This conception of Palestine, therefore, was not always a fantastic one. Today, however, with the world Jewish population about seventeen million, Palestine must assume another role in the life of the Jewish people.

Another reason for the failure of the philosophy of refuge was the deep attachment which Jews developed toward the adopted civilizations of western countries. The life of Germany, France, England, America became so much a part of the personality of their respective residents that, even in the face of the most extreme persecution, Jews were reluctant to surrender their newly acquired culture. One need only observe the loyalty of German Jews to their German cultural heritage to realize to what a degree western culture has taken hold of Jews. Even if it were possible physically for all Jews to fit into Palestine, and even if it were to their advantage to abandon the countries of their adoption, one might venture to say that they would still hesitate to transplant themselves to so completely different an environment and civilization. In any event the philosophy of refuge has become obsolete.

III

A second conception of the place of Palestine in Jewish life has been the one expressed in the hope that Palestine would serve as a cultural center for the Jewish people. The outstanding exponent of that philosophy was Ahad Ha-Am. It is interesting to note that his disagreement with Herzl consisted in the attempt to serve Judaism rather than the Jew himself. Not only did he not accept the thesis that all Jews could or would migrate to Palestine, he did not even contemplate the necessity for migration. In his essay entitled "Slavery in Freedom," he seems to have assumed the permanence of the Emancipation. To such a degree, indeed, did he accept the Emancipation as an established fact that his only fear was that it might prove too successful, that Jews might be completely won over to the civilization in which they found themselves, and that the essential Jewish personality, or National Ego, might disappear from the world. For him this would have been the greatest tragedy. He believed that each nation has a distinctive quality, with a distinctive contribution to make to the world, and that this quality can be realized only in an integrated community life. It was evident to him that Jewish life was rapidly disintegrating. The Jewish people, he felt, were becoming rapidly acclimatized and absorbed into the larger masses, and the contribution which a Jewish National Ego might make was being seriously jeopardized. This contribution he conceived to be the totality of cultural achievements expressed in art, literature, music, and so on, which reflected the essential ethical outlook of the prophetic tradition. Palestine was essential, therefore, for the preservation of the spiritual life of the Jewish people, and, because of that spiritual life, essential for the world. He interpreted the verse "From Zion shall go forth Torah" in humanistic terms to signify that the culture which Jews were capable of producing as a community would radiate throughout the world.

In view of the obvious impossibility of making Palestine a place of refuge, Ahad Ha-Am's conception of Palestine as a cultural center became for a large portion of the Jewish world the accepted philosophy of Zionism. It would not be altogether just to contend that this conception of the function of Palestine has failed altogether. Thus far, of course, very little has come out of Palestine of a cultural nature that may be considered an important contribution to the culture of the world. We have had some songs, but no important creativity in music. We have had something of Jewish creative art in the work of the Bezalel school, but thus far no essential Jewish art. In fact, both musicians and artists are still at a loss to define what is Jewish art and Jewish music. This cannot be considered a failure, however, because the whole renascence is very young. It would be unrealistic to expect a new and significant culture to arise almost over night. Undoubtedly, in the course of time, a distinctive cultural expression will emerge.

But from the point of view of motivating interest in and support of the building

of Palestine, the prospects of an ultimate cultural efflorescence is very remote, and it is difficult to say how Palestine can be made to appear to Jews as a vital force in their lives on the basis of an as yet unrealized and unachieved culture.

Perhaps the most fundamental weakness of this approach lies in the fact that culture today is regarded as a luxury. The world is so preoccupied with the pressing questions of economic needs, and people are so involved in the universal questions of economic reconstruction, that they are unresponsive to a program of cultural rehabilitation and cannot see why they should be called upon to give of their time, their service and their means toward the revival of a literature, art and music.

IV

Those who were responsible for the philosophy of Labor Zionism undoubtedly realized that the upbuilding of Palestine could capture the imagination of Jews everywhere, and the sympathetic support of progressive non-Jews, only if the upbuilding were to take place simultaneously with the establishment of a new social order. The synthesis of Zionism and Socialism was for a time the most realistic interpretation of the ancient Messianic idea. Since Palestine, according to traditional thought, was to be the setting of world redemption, it should be in modern thought, the setting of that experiment in justice and cooperative living which would inaugurate a new era in social history. Inspired by the message of the Prophets and guided by the most modern sociological doctrines, men like Brenner and Gordon sought to make Palestine the laboratory for the perfection of the social system. It must not be mistakenly believed that they were indifferent to the development of culture. They conceived of culture as the reflection of the type of life lived in any nation; and the kind of culture they were interested in was a culture which would reflect a just social order. To strive for cultural values without first attempting to lay the proper economic and social foundation was to put the cart before the horse. For them the verse, "From Zion shall go forth Torah," meant that Palestine was destined to become the model of justice and righteousness which all of the nations would want to emulate.

The expounders of this philosophy believed that Palestine had all of the qualifications necessary to be the model of a just society. It was an uninhabited country, untouched by western civilization, and therefore unspoiled by its evils. The pioneers, imbued with zeal for self-sacrifice, could build from the bottom up. They could begin by taking the proper course, and they could avoid all the corrupting habits with which their experience in Europe had acquainted them. Those who came to settle would be attracted by the passion for social justice, and those who remained in the diaspora would be impelled to lend to the rebuilding every moral and material support, for they would regard it as an outlet for the expression of their passion for the right. Diaspora Jewry would thus be cooperating toward the establishment of a Jewish society based upon the highest Jewish ideals, and thus indirectly making their contribution to the world.

One of the most grievous disappointments that Jews in our generation have experienced has been the failure of this romantic idea. Those who are acquainted with recent developments in Palestine know of the flagrant violations of social ethics that are perpetrated there. The amount of land speculation is alarming. The original idea of the Labor Zionists that land in Palestine should be owned not by private individuals, but by the Jewish people as a whole, has been left far behind by the movement of events. Jews are buying land for their own gain, and what is worse, they are selling and re-selling to each other for their own gain, and to the great harm of the whole people. The original idea of cooperative enterprises for the benefit of the masses has been replaced by private enterprise. As

a result labor is aligned against capital, and all the evils of every other nation are duplicated in the new Palestine. The rebuilding has given rise even to political parties which repudiate the philosophy of Labor Zionism, and insist that the Jewish people, far from becoming a model for emulation by other nations, should themselves emulate the powers of the world, and in doing so achieve the much desired "normalcy" which Jews so sadly need.

Why has Palestine failed to become the perfect little model of a just society? Why was it not possible to build the just order from its very foundations? The answer should be very clear now, even to Labor Zionists: because Palestine was simply not being built up from "scratch." It is true that those who came in the "second *aliyah*" were for the most part impelled by clear ideas and unswerving devotion to the cause. But Palestine does not exist in a vacuum, and the type of its immigrants could not be chosen by hand. World events turned populations toward Palestine which had never dreamed of coming. Secondly, the optimism that prevailed in this newly developed land established a striking contrast to the economic gloom that pervaded the diaspora; and Jews began to hasten to Palestine to invest in a land that seemed to have a future, whatever funds they still had left. They knew no philosophy of Zionism. For them Palestine was not even "Eretz Yisrael"; it was merely a new outlet for capital.

Perhaps the profit seeking of these Jews might have been controlled, if it had not been for the urgent need for speed in the upbuilding. The crises that affected tens of thousands of German Jews, for example, made necessary the quick expansion of the economic absorptive capacity of the land; and as loudly as Labor Zionists protested, they could not help but admit that the immediate needs of exiled Jews had to supercede beautifully planned programs.

But even if the right kind of people had settled the land, and there was no particular hurry to develop it, the chances of making Palestine a model society would be negligible. Only a country which controls its own destiny, and possesses the commodities which other nations require can afford to maintain its own distinctive system. Even Russia with its political independence, and its vast natural resources, has found it very difficult to preserve Communism in the capitalist world which surrounds it. How much more difficult for Palestine to go its own distinctive way as a mandated territory, with practically no wealth of natural resources.

V

We have seen thus far that the three outstanding functions assigned to Palestine have failed to provide a basic philosophy of Zionism for the modern Jew. Before considering an alternative, it should be perfectly clear that, insofar as Jews are conscious of a deep kinship with other Jews, and are sensitive to their needs, proud of their achievements and saddened by their failures, every Jew will naturally want to see as many Jews take refuge in Palestine as required a place of refuge. Certainly the fact that *all* the Jews of the world can not find a place there is no reason for not striving to settle as many as possible. It would be outright cruelty to maintain that Jews are *merely escaping* their responsibilities by fleeing the scenes of their oppression. Jews who condemn their fellow Jews for getting out from under Fascism have just never experienced the terror of Fascism. It should be a source of intense relief to realize that at least twenty thousand German Jews have been taken into a land where they are wanted; and diaspora Jewry should continue to seek new ways of increasing the absorptive capacity of the country.

Similarly, Jews everywhere are undoubtedly thrilled by any new manifestation of the Jewish cultural genius, and they may well recognize that, if that genius is to flourish anywhere, it will do so in Palestine. Finally, Jews should be, and generally are, sensitive to the state of the nation's morality, personal and social.

Certainly every progressive Jew would like to feel that his people are living up to the highest possible standards of economic decency and honesty. But the fallacy underlying both the cultural and the economic philosophy of Zionism is this: each presupposes that the Jewish people requires Palestine for some definite purpose, either to radiate culture, or to teach social ethics.

This is the fallacy that underlies the failure to distinguish between a mission and a standard. A mission describes a *raison d'etre.* To ascribe a mission to Palestine is to justify or to attempt to justify the very existence of new Palestine on the ground that it will serve a purpose which no other country can possibly serve. Such justification presupposes the ability to make that contribution, without expressly envisaging the nature of the contribution. This is dangerous doctrine for two reasons: one, because the promise to make that contribution places an unfair responsbility upon the shoulders of the people, and second, because it assumes that the revival of any nation's activity in the family of nations *requires* justification. Such doctrine is tantamount to the belief that a man must prove the world's need of him before the world will permit him to exist.

A "standard" is another matter altogether. It assumes that any organism which possesses the will to live has a right to exist. It promises nothing to the world, it merely makes demands upon the already existing organism. Jews may have no mission; but Jews should have standards, ideals, ambitions, hopes. We do not need Palestine to radiate culture; but we do most earnestly desire that the culture, if any, which Palestine may create, should be of a high calibre. (We desire that out of a sense of family pride, if you will; but that pride is not so overwhelming as to make claims to a "mission.") We do not need Palestine to act as a model for the world of nations; but we do deeply desire that the Jews of Palestine do nothing that may make us ashamed.

This point represents the very crux of an alternative philosophy of Zionism. The outgrown philosophies of Zionism are forms of *raison d'etre*; the alternative one declares that Zionism represents the very thesis that no *raison d'etre* is ever necessary, that *the right to live derives from the will to live.*

This function Palestine can and should perform for Jews throughout the world. Never before have Jews been so boldly challenged to justify their existence as a separate people. The answers to this challenge have been manifold. Reformists have talked of a world mission. Others have told the world that variety is more to be desired than monotony,—and hence the right of Israel to live. Zionists today have the strongest and most valid answer of all. They should point to Palestine and say, "This is the symbol for us of the invalidity of your challenge. The French do not have to meet such a challenge; neither do the English—nor do we." For there is no greater evidence of the Jewish will to live than is Palestine. Despite the speculation and the profit seeking, one profound desire moves every Jew in Palestine, and that is the desire that the Jewish people live. What greater reason exists for the diaspora Jew to be concerned with the upbuilding of Palestine, than the fact that Palestine acts as the national symbol of a principle of life itself?

The Revolt Against Reason

By Milton Steinberg

I

ONE of the most interesting phenomena in the thought life of the modern world is a revolt against reason. This rebellion against the intellect is all the more arresting because it follows so closely upon several centuries during which man deified his ability to think. For from the 17th century on, modern man has put his trust in his mind. He felt that if only he used it adequately he could solve all of life's puzzles. But in the last fifty years a wave of profound disillusionment has swept philosophical and scientific circles. It was discovered in the first place that there were areas of life which were essentially non-rational and which as a result would forever escape capture by logic. Men found to their own dismay that three thousand years of philosophical and scientific thinking had failed to provide them with certainty, that at the end of centuries of hard intellectual work there was no single proposition which was absolutely demonstrable, not even the proposition that two plus two equal four. In addition, they learned recently that, far from being an objective, impersonal force, reason serves often as a device by which men fortify attitudes, desires and emotions which they maintain on non-rational grounds. Last of all, the intellect has failed to provide men with clear guidance in the business of living. In brief, after thousands of years of thinking, and after three centuries of blind confidence in the powers of thought, the human intellect has been revealed as inapplicable to certain realms of reality, susceptible to perversion for special ends, incompetent to provide certainty, and incapable of giving sure direction to man's activity.

It is inevitable in view of this failure that men seek for other instruments to take the place of rationalism in providing them with an explanation of the world and with direction to their lives. The search for a substitute is revealed in Freud with his theory of the sub-conscious, and in pragmatism which, renouncing reason, endeavors to find a new criterion of truth in the workability of a proposition, and a new basis for ethics in the practical results of any line of conduct.

One of the arch-rebels against the intellect has been the brilliant French-Jewish philosopher, Henri Bergson. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, in his *Matter and Memory, Time and Free Will*, and *Creative Evolution* alike, he subjects reason to the most scathing criticism which has been levelled against it since the days of the old Greek sceptics. His entire case centers upon the fact that reality is a constantly changing fluidity, whereas the intellect by its very character deals in sharp, concise and clearly defined concepts. It is impossible, he contends, to catch a flowing reality in stable ideas. Through this critique of reason Bergson has made valuable contributions to modern thought. He has helped to destroy the old psychology which regarded the mind as a series of discrete states of thought. He has solved some of the riddles of philosophy by pointing out that they spring from the artificiality of applying rigid concepts to a reality which is elastic. As a substitute for reason, Bergson advocates intuition. When we look down within us, we discover that our consciousness is a flow of sensation and emotion, of qualitative change. When we consider the physical world without, we find that it too is a restless, unbroken continuum. The material world is the same sort of thing as our consciousness within

us. "Physics is simply psychics inverted." In this fashion Bergson arrived at his theory of the *elan vital.* One of the most dazzling passages in modern philosophy is to be found in Bergson's application of this theory of a life force to biology. There he demonstrates that no account of the evolution of life is adequate unless it assumes that behind the universe there moves a driving power, akin to human consciousness, of which reality is only an outer shell.

II

After twenty-five years of silence Bergson is heard from once again. In his recently published work entitled *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion** he takes up his argument at the point at which he interrupted it a quarter of a century ago. This time he is concerned not with abstruse philosophical problems but with issues of great practical moment—namely, morality and religion. Once again, he reveals the same anti-intellectualism. Morality, he tells us, rises from two sources. On the one hand, it springs from a sense of obligation which in man is the analogue of instinct in animals. Just as in an ant colony each individual by instinctive action subordinates his own interests to those of the group, so in man there is an inherent social instinct which moves him to live not for himself but for the community. That which is instinct in the bee is a sense of social pressure in man. In both cases it is Nature's device for preserving the species. Two things should be noted about the morality of instinct. It is in the first place sub-rational, and in the second place it operates for a limited society only. The bee exhibits patriotism only for its own hive. The instinctive morality is concerned only with the clan, the family, the country —not with humanity.

But there is, Bergson tells us, a second source of morality. This is the morality which is the creation of the moral genius. As musicians invent new musical forms and artists reveal new perceptions of nature, in both cases original creative acts expressive of deep-seated emotion, so certain individuals reveal new perspectives in human relationships. This moral creativity, Bergson insists, is super-rational. It is higher than reason as the musical creations of a great musician are above intelligence. But once this vision has been caught by the creative genius, men follow it because of a power of attraction which inheres in it, as men are drawn to great literature, great music and great painting by an emotional magnetism.

It will be observed that in this account of morality reason plays almost no part. For morality in origin is either sub-rational or super-rational. All that reason can do is study, collate and compare moralities. It cannot create them. As a matter of fact, a logical ethic might with justification advocate egoism. And even if a morality based upon reason does not urge selfishness there is nothing in man to compel him to accept a reasoned morality. As Bergson puts it, "One can always reason with reason."

What is true of the moral life of man is equally true of religion. The latter too is of dual character, the first of which manifests itself in what Bergson denominates as static religion. The life impulse behind the universe drives man to live. It has created intelligence in man to enable him to live more fully. But intelligence can turn against the vital drive. Man, for example, can through his intelligence break loose from the social instinct and decide upon a self-centered life which is destructive of the species. Reason, furthermore, tells man that he must die. This awareness of inevitable doom negates the natural impulse toward life. In addition, man knows that between his desire and its realization there is a vast realm of uncertainty. He would therefore, if he obeyed reason alone, hestitate in setting out to attain what he wishes. Thus does reason inhibit life. But Nature is not content to allow man to destroy himself through his

*Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1935.

intelligence. It has used this very inhibiting intelligence against itself. By postulating spirits and gods it has allowed the life drive to continue. These spirits are conceived to punish offences against social morality. They serve thus to suppress the self-centeredness which is born of the intellect. The Gods guarantee immortality and thus lift from the human heart the crushing recognition that death is inevitable. They cooperate with man and thus give him assurance in facing the gap between desire and its attainment. Static religion is then "a defensive reaction of Nature against what might be depressing for the individual, and dissolvent for society, in the exercise of intelligence."

But religion has also a second character. There are some human beings who turn back to reality from time to time and catch intuitively the reality of a great life drive behind the universe. These people feel themselves as part and parcel of a storming river which moves through all things. The second source of religion is then mysticism, an emotional identification of one's self with the ultimate reality together with the sense of expansion, exultation, certainty and joy which flow from it. Now, the vital drive behind the world is an active drive. The full and complete mystic, having experienced directly its reality, returns to a life of larger activity.

III

To those who have followed the development of Bergson's thought, what he says in his most recent book is a natural development of what he said in his earlier works. His theories of morality and religion alike follow naturally from his entire system. And yet there is a profound difference between the earlier works and this most recent one. Brilliant as is the reasoning and gracious as is the style of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, it is not the Bergson of twenty-five years ago. This reviewer could not help but think in reading the book of the gestures of an old dancer, in which there are still grace and precision, now grown the least bit lax. So, too, in the Bergson of today, the argumentation is often flabby and the style, while reminiscent of more youthful vigor, heavier and blurred. Incidentally, this reviewer experienced not only a sense of disappointment but on occasion one of sharp irritation. For all Bergson's erudition he still does not know what every Jew ought to know, namely, that the Christianity of Jesus was not an original contribution but an expression of the current Jewish morality and religion of the first century. It is annoying to find a Jew of international importance ignorant of what Gentile scholars have long admitted, and possessed of the exploded notion that Judaism in contrast with Christianity is an inferior religious system.

None of these considerations, however, should prevent an active appreciation of Bergson's newest contribution. His treatment of the sources of morality is immensely significant in the emphasis which it lays upon instinct and inspiration as driving motifs in man's moral living. His treatment of religion calls fresh attention to the fact that it answers vital needs and that the mystical intuition must not be neglected.

But if Bergson throughout makes valuable reading, every one of his works and his last especially reveals the weaknesses of anti-intellectualism. It is more than a little paradoxical for a man to build up a case against reason and to use reason to the full in order to establish that case. And even if we are tolerant enough to overlook this contradictory tactic, now that reason is dead, what remains to us? A religion which is entirely mystical is, in the first place, entirely personal, and in the second place, not susceptible to logical examination, for all discussion involves the use of reason. Similarly with morality. If morality be sub-rational in its sources of instinct, there is nothing which reason can do to change it. And if it be super-rational, then it is also beyond intellectual criticism, both in morality and in religion

we are left without criteria of judgment and evaluation. The fantastic aspect of the whole is that, although Bergson himself is obviously a person of good-will, his theories play directly into the hands of people of whose good-will we are not so certain. A religion based upon mystical intuition, unchecked by reason, is capable of all sorts of grossnesses and stupidities. And a morality which springs merely from the dream of a creative genius might very well be a destructive morality. Thus, Hitler today could very well claim that he has caught a new moral vision of a mankind redeemed through the sense of racial communion. Bergson is not altogether undisturbed by the abuses to which his system lends itself. He merely tells us, however, that in such cases the mysticism is false and the moral vision not truly a vision. But how are we to distinguish between true and false mysticism and between true and false morality without reason as the criterion? It is one of the unfortunate traits of men that, once they have adopted a position, they feel impelled to maintain that position to the exclusion of others. Bergson, having aligned himself in the anti-rationalist camp, cannot give his opponents their due.

It is then an intriguing experience—this business of following an anti-intellectualist. One learns a great deal about the inadequacy of human thought, about the meaning of emotion, intuition, and the mystical impulse in man. But the further one travels with an anti-rationalist the more one perceives the need for reason. It is a poor staff, crooked and cracked—this intellect on which we must lean. It must be spliced and supported with stays borrowed from the emotional and intuitive. But it is the only staff upon which man can rest his weight with some assurance that it will not break entirely under him at the moment when he needs it most.

The Rejoicing Over The Drawing of The Water

By Mordecai H. Lewittes

JERUSALEM has witnessed a revival within the past two years of a long dormant religious observance, the "Rejoicing over the Drawing of the Water" (*Simhat Bet Hashoavah*). It was originally celebrated with such eclat that the Rabbis, in referring to it, were wont to say: "He who has not seen the Rejoicing over the Drawing of the Water has never seen real rejoicing in his life." Palestinian soil, which is so favorable for the rebirth of ancient Jewish traditions, promises to restore to this celebration all its former joyousness.

In Bet-HaKerem, one of the suburbs of Jerusalem, a stage was erected consisting of fifteen steps, representing the steps leading down to the Women's Court in the Temple, which were said to correspond to the fifteen Psalms of Ascents. Long before we arrived, we caught sight of giant beacons which illuminated the entire surroundings. These were placed on the hills, above the valley in which the stage was situated, in the shape of a large rectangle. It was an impressive sight which lent the entire scene a touch of grandeur.

Soon the presentation started. First came the procession of Levites with musical instruments and songs. These were followed by two priests, who descended the steps, sounding trumpets. When they came to the door, which represented the Eastern Gate of the Temple, they proclaimed in loud voices: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." It was at this point in the ancient ceremony that the priests used to turn toward the Temple and declare, "Our fathers who were in this place turned their backs toward the Temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the East, and they worshiped the sun toward the East, but as for us, our eyes

are turned toward God."

This was followed by the celebrated torch dance of the "pious and men of deeds." According to tradition, these were the men who could truthfully say of themselves "Happy is our youth that it hath not cast shame on our old age." It was reported of Rabbi Simeon, the son of Gamaliel, that he would take eight lighted torches in one hand, and throw them in the air, receiving the first torch as he threw the second. When he prostrated himself, he would push his two large toes into the earth, and then bend his body, touching the earth with his mouth.

Certainly these youthful dancers, clad in white garments, were inspired with the spirit of Rabbi Simeon. In and around they wound, holding their torches aloft, singing as they danced: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The audience was enchanted with the enthusiastic and frenzied dancing of these youthful "men of deeds," and soon caught up the gay refrain "Out of the well of salvation." Faster and faster moved the dancers, faster and faster swayed the torches, making a spectacle which one will not soon forget.

The occasion was not without a touch of humor. When the chorus first sang, "Draw water," a Yemenite vendor of soda water, Palestine's national drink, inadvertently began to hawk his wares in a loud voice, "Gazuz! Gazuz!" The musical selection which was rendered after the torch dance was also humorously inappropriate, the band playing "The Barber of Seville." The celebration was concluded by the audience itself which formed large circles and gaily danced the Horah.

The Yeshivahs of Eastern Europe and Palestine have long celebrated the *Simhat Bet Hashoavah,* although less formally and less artistically. Yeshivat Hebron of Jerusalem has gained note for its spirited festivities. The Bahurim, so extreme in religious practice and so unattractive in external appearance, have an inexhaustable fount of enthusiasm. The innocent spectator enters merely to watch the proceedings, but is immediately dragged, by some bearded hasid or by one of the bahurim, into the line of dancers which winds around in snakelike fashion. Even the old Rabbis, heads of the institution, are forced to join and to dance, or rather run to the martial tune of "Let there be redemption, let the Messiah come already." Here, too, the tempo increases. They commence the Horah and soon the entire Yeshivah has become the scene of many giddily-turning circles of Horah-dancers, circle within circle. An old hasid with picturesque *paot, tzitzit* hanging down, moves into the center of the hall and performs a skilful cane-dance. An American bahur studying at the Yeshivah does a dance which looks dangerously like the Charleston, but the hasidim loudly applaud his religious enthusiasm. The festivities carry on late into the night, almost fulfilling the statement of Rabbi Joshua Ben Hananya, "When we celebrated the *Simhat Bet Hashoavah* we did not taste the taste of sleep."

The symbolism underlying this ceremony is clear. It is an appeal for rain in abundance. He who has been in Palestine knows only too well the great importance of rain during the winter, on which depend both the crops and the supply of water for household purposes. The Feast of Tabernacles, at the beginning of the winter season, is traditionally the time when judgment is passed by God on the amount of rain to be granted in the coming year. According to the Talmud, God commands His people Israel, "Pour out water before Me on the festival, in order that your rains for the year may be blessed."

But Palestine is restoring to the *Simhat Bet Hashoavah,* and other Jewish festivals, their original spirit of joy, not only because they dramatize needs which arise out of Palestinian life. There is another cause. It is the supreme joy that comes of rebuilding a Homeland.